

Buckley inks with Ice Dogs, Speer goes to the Wolves

BY BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

Grant Buckley was back at the scene of his 1999 Ontario Hockey League draft triumph with a done deal in hand Saturday in Mississauga.

Meanwhile, one of the 15-year-old Stouffville area residents Spirit of Stouffville teammates was setting his sights on Sudbury.

Buckley, who played with the Spirit last season after being selected by the OHL's Mississauga Ice Dogs in last June's special draft of under-17 year olds, signed on with the Ice Dogs for the 2000-2001 season Thursday.

"I'm really looking forward to playing for the Ice Dogs," said Buckley, a 6-foot 2-inch, 200-pound defenceman. He said he had no doubt he'd be inked by the Ice Dogs after a season with the Spirit that saw him collect six goals and 18 assists during the regular Provincial Junior A Hockey League schedule. He added another three goals and three assists in 14 playoff games.

"I knew it was going to happen right away. Don Cherry (Ice Dogs director) liked the way I played."

Buckley attended Saturday's draft to meet with the Ice Dogs educational counsellor to discuss plans for his upcoming Grade 12 year. He was also on hand to celebrate with his Spirit teammate Dan Speer as the 15-year-old forward was selected in the fourth round, 77th overall, by the Sudbury



GRANT BUCKLEY
Spirit defenceman signs with Mississauga

Wolves in the 2000 OHL Priority Selection. Speer, who stands 6-feet tall and weighs 170 pounds, had five goals and 11 assists for the regular season as a member of the Spirit. The Thunder Bay native, who is represented by Boston player agent and former National Hockey League star Bobby Orr, picked up a goal and an assist in 10 postseason games.

Buckley, who will take up residence as a billet in Mississauga when the season begins, said he was delighted to be playing with a Greater Toronto Area team.

"One of the bonuses of playing there is that it's so close to home."

Buckley said his season with the Spirit was a valuable experience for him.

"I learned a lot, especially from Craig Donovan (assistant coach) on defence. And Brian (head coach Perrin) was a great coach."

Buckley plans to begin an intense summer conditioning program upon completing his Grade 11 exams at Pickering College in Newmarket. The Ice Dogs begin their training camp in early August.

Spiritually speaking: Seventeen-year-old Spirit winger Mike Fiume was bypassed at the draft after making it clear he was going to pursue a hockey scholarship in the United States after completing high school. Fiume, who was second among Spirit point getters in the playoffs with 15, was approached by Colgate University towards the end of the past season. He should be back with the Spirit for the 2000-2001 season.

Anthony Mimicucci, the 17-year-old Spirit winger who had 18 goals and 12 assists last season, along with 14 points in the playoffs, wasn't selected in Saturday's draft.

Mennos are back in town and having a ball

BY BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

The boys of summer have returned to the Stouffville softball diamond.

The Stouffville Mennos men's fastball team is back at Memorial Park for its Wednesday evening home games after ironing out a wrinkle that led them to play out of Victoria Square last season. And as in past seasons, the team resembles a family compact, with no less than three sets of brothers, and several cousins, in the lineup.

Chris, Rich and Ryan Burkholder are all back, along with Ed Burkholder, a cousin. Brothers Rich and Rob Reesor are in tow, and second baseman/outfielder Jeff Boadway joins his catcher brother, Shawn, on the team. Howard Burkholder, the father of the Burkholder trio, is back to coach the team, with help from Art Burkholder.

Veteran righthander Byron Baranieski is back as the ace of a pitching staff that includes returnees Paul Boynton, Terry Reesor and Jeff Steiner. Veterans Kyle Barber, Eric Musselman and Scott Eyre round out the team.



CHRIS BURKHOLDER
Feels Mennos will have a good year

With a 5-1 first-place record so far in its Oshawa City and District men's Fastball League schedule, the Mennos are looking to improve on last year's second-place finish.

"We're optimistic we can do well this season," said Chris Burkholder, a hard hitting first baseman/catcher.

But with the league tightening up after dropping the four midget level teams, which were included in last year's loop, there should be a higher level of competition, he suggests.

The Mennos will once again square off against their traditional rivals the Claremont Rebels. Other entries are from Port Perry, Markham, Oshawa and Bradford, while the Aurora Mud Hens have shifted to Mt. Albert.

Sluggers Rob Reesor, Ed Burkholder and Baranieski are expected to spearhead the Mennos attack.

"Those three can really hit the ball," said Chris Burkholder. "The rest fill in with singles."

The return of the Mennos to Stouffville has been welcomed by the hometown faithful, said Chris Burkholder.

"There's been a good turnout so far. Stouffville supports softball."

Pop flies: Stouffville's world class level junior men's lefthanded pitcher Paul Koert is playing for the Saskatoon Steelcraft senior men's team this season. Playing junior ball with Kemptville last season, Koert, 21, was picked up by the St. Catharines team and helped them to the Canadian junior title.

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